



Navigating Administrative Prerequisites For Effective Implementation Of Competency Based Curriculum In Universal Primary Education Schools: a Case Of Otuke District, Uganda

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ABSTRACT

Uganda introduced the Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) in 2020 to transform its education system from a knowledge based model to a learner centred approach that promotes practical skills, critical thinking, collaboration, and lifelong learning. While this reform aims to improve educational quality and align learning outcomes with National Development Goals (NDP), its effective implementation in Universal Primary Education (UPE) schools particularly in rural Districts such as Otuke depends heavily on administrative readiness. This study employed documentary analysis of peer reviewed literature, policy briefs, and institutional reports published between 2019 and 2025 to examine the administrative prerequisites necessary for successful CBC implementation. Findings revealed that leadership preparedness, sustained professional development, adequate resource allocation, structured monitoring systems, and stakeholder collaboration are critical determinants of effective implementation. However, many schools face significant challenges, including insufficient leadership training specific to CBC, limited instructional materials, inadequate ICT infrastructure, financial constraints, weak supervision mechanisms, and resistance to pedagogical change. These challenges are more pronounced in rural contexts, where infrastructural and capacity limitations constrain administrative effectiveness. The study further indicates that schools demonstrating proactive leadership, collaborative professional learning communities, systematic mentoring, and data-driven monitoring show stronger alignment with CBC principles. It concludes that bridging the policy implementation gap requires deliberate investment in leadership empowerment, resource mobilization, and institutional capacity building. Strengthening administrative prerequisites is therefore essential to ensuring sustainable CBC implementation and improving learner competency development across Uganda's UPE school.



Keywords – Competency Based Curriculum, Administrative Prerequisites, Effective Implementation, School Leadership, Universal Primary Education

1. Introduction

Educational reforms across Africa increasingly prioritize competency based curricula to shift away from traditional, rote learning approaches toward more learner centered, skills oriented education (Namatende et al., 2025). In Uganda, this shift began with the introduction of a new CBC aimed at equipping learners with critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and practical skills relevant to 21st-century demands (Namatende et al., 2025). The success of such reform, however, largely depends on the readiness of educational administrators to plan, coordinate, and support systemic changes in curriculum delivery. The implementation of Uganda's Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) is coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Sports and the National Curriculum Development Centre, which provide professional development, instructional guidelines, and curriculum materials to schools (MoES, 2020; NCDC, 2023). The Uganda National Examinations Board aligns assessment frameworks to competency standards to ensure coherence in evaluation practices (UNEB, 2022). Guided by Curriculum Implementation Theory (Gross et al., 1971), effective delivery depends on clarity of reform goals, teacher capability, adequate resources, and strong leadership support. These pillars directly contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on inclusive and quality education by strengthening institutional capacity and improving learning outcomes (MoES, 2020; NCDC, 2023; UNEB, 2022). Administrative prerequisites such as leadership competence, continuous professional development, resource allocation, monitoring mechanisms, and stakeholder engagement are vital for aligning school operations with CBC goals. While existing studies explore teacher perspectives and curriculum outcomes, there is limited research focused on administrative preparedness in the Ugandan primary education context. This study fills that gap by reviewing relevant literature and reflecting on how administrators' roles influence CBC implementation in UPE schools, with implications for Otuke District.

1.1 Needs and Significance of the Study

The shift to CBC represents a transformative agenda for primary education in Uganda. It requires not only new teaching methods and assessment practices but also systemic administrative support. Administrators must foster conditions where curriculum change is understood, resourced, monitored, and sustained. Without such administrative prerequisites, CBC implementation risks falling short of its transformative potential, especially in rural districts like Otuke where structural constraints are often pronounced. Understanding administrative needs ensures that educational reform does not remain a policy aspiration but translates into tangible classroom practices. This study contributes to educational leadership literature and provides



actionable insights for policymakers, district education officers, and school administrators in Uganda and similar contexts across Africa.

2. Statement of the Problem

Despite nationwide adoption of the CBC, implementation challenges persist. Reports indicate that while teacher preparedness and classroom practices have been studied, there is insufficient focus on administrative systems and readiness that support these processes (Namatende et al., 2025). In Uganda's lower secondary schools, teacher experiences reveal systemic limitations such as inadequate resourcing, limited continuous professional development, and weak support structures, which impede effective curriculum delivery (Kachope et al., 2025). Moreover, calls for improved stakeholder orientation suggest that administrators at district and school levels may not be fully equipped to drive the required change (EPRC Uganda, 2025). In Otuke District representative of many rural Ugandan contexts limited research exists on how administrators prepare for and support CBC implementation in primary schools. Without addressing such administrative prerequisites, policy intentions may not translate into improved learning outcomes.

2.1 General Objective:

To examine the administrative prerequisites for effective implementation of the Competency Based Curriculum in Universal Primary Education schools in Otuke District, Uganda.

2.2 Specific Objectives:

1. To assess leadership preparedness for CBC implementation.
2. To evaluate the adequacy of administrative professional development.
3. To examine resource allocation for CBC support.
4. To determine the effectiveness of monitoring and stakeholder collaboration mechanisms.

2.4 Research Questions:

1. What administrative structures exist to support CBC implementation?
2. How prepared are educational administrators for curriculum reform?
3. Are resources and training sufficient to support CBC?
4. How effective are monitoring and stakeholder coordination systems?



2.5 Operational Definitions of Key Terms

1. Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC): Refers to a learner centered curriculum approach that emphasizes the acquisition and demonstration of competencies, knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values through continuous assessment and practical application rather than rote memorization.

2. Administrative Prerequisites: Refers to the essential institutional conditions, structures, competencies, and resources that must be in place within school administration to enable effective implementation of educational reforms, particularly the Competency Based Curriculum.

3. Effective Implementation: Refers to the successful execution of curriculum reform in a manner that aligns with policy objectives, ensures proper instructional delivery, promotes competency mastery among learners, and sustains continuous improvement through monitoring and evaluation.

5. School Leadership: Refers to the process through which school administrators influence, guide, and support teachers and stakeholders in achieving curriculum goals and improving learner outcomes.

4. Universal Primary Education (UPE): Refers to a government policy initiative in Uganda aimed at providing free and compulsory primary education to all school age children to promote equitable access to basic education.

3. Literature Review

Uganda's shift to a Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) began in 2020, replacing the traditional knowledge based system with a framework aimed at developing broader learner competencies (Namatende et al., 2025). This reform aligns with global education trends emphasizing higher-order thinking skills and 21st-century competencies such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, innovation, and lifelong learning. The CBC prioritizes learner-centred pedagogy, authentic assessment, and practical skill acquisition (Namatende et al., 2025). However, evidence suggests that implementation remains uneven due to systemic and administrative challenges.

Studies in Uganda's lower secondary schools identify limited teacher training, inadequate resource provision, weak institutional support, and insufficient monitoring mechanisms as major barriers (Kachope et al., 2025). Teachers report moderate confidence in learner centred instruction but demonstrate gaps in formative assessment, rubric development, ICT integration, and performance-based grading areas that require strong administrative coordination and support.



Leadership research in Uganda highlights the pivotal role of school administrators in fostering professional learning communities (PLCs), facilitating in-house capacity building, and aligning school development plans with curriculum reforms (Makerere University, 2025). Nevertheless, many administrators lack structured preparation for managing competency based reforms. Resource and infrastructure constraints including shortages of instructional materials, limited digital tools, unreliable internet, and poor classroom conditions further weaken implementation capacity (Kachope et al., 2025; EPRC Uganda, 2025).

Administrative challenges also include increased teacher workload due to continuous assessment requirements, financial limitations at school level, and resistance to shifting from teacher centred to learner-centred pedagogies (Kachope et al., 2025). Effective leadership emerges as a critical enabler. School heads who provide mentorship, foster collaboration, manage limited resources strategically, and establish monitoring systems enhance instructional quality and reform sustainability (Kachope et al., 2025).

Moreover, sustained, practice-oriented professional development rather than short theoretical workshops is essential for meaningful CBC adoption (UNESCO, 2020; IICBA, 2025). Alignment between national assessments and CBC learning goals is also necessary to prevent reversion to rote learning (OECD, 2019). Inclusive stakeholder engagement, including parents and community leaders, strengthens ownership and contextual adaptation of curriculum reforms (Kachope et al., 2025).

Collectively, the literature suggests that in rural contexts such as Otuke District, the key challenge lies in bridging the policy implementation gap. While curriculum policies exist, administrative capacity, infrastructure readiness, and contextualized resource provision remain limited. Effective CBC implementation therefore requires tangible empowerment of school leaders alongside policy alignment.

4. Methods and Procedures

Given the documentary nature of this study, analysis was conducted through comprehensive review of current academic journal articles, policy briefs, and research reports from 2019 to 2025 related to CBC implementation in Uganda and similar contexts. Documents were sourced from educational journals, universities, and research centers, notably; Education Policy Research Centre (EPRC) Uganda. (2025), International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA). (2025), Chepkonga, M. C. (2022), Kachope, G., Nyakato, V. N., & Mwesigye, A. (2025), Koros, P., & Achieng, D. (2022), Namatende Sakwa, L., Kiambati, F., Luyima, J., Busingye, K., Isingoma, J., Anguyo, M., & Kakooza, A. (2025), Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES). (2020), National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC). (2023), Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB). (2022), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and



Development (OECD). (2019) and UNESCO. (2020). Thematic content analysis was used to extract key insights on administrative prerequisites such as leadership capacity, training systems, resource allocation, supervision, and stakeholder engagement that are relevant to the topic.

5. Findings and Discussion

5.1 Leadership Preparedness

Documentary analysis confirmed that leadership preparedness is a foundational prerequisite for CBC implementation. Evidence from administrative workshops in Uganda indicates recognition that leadership shapes how curriculum reforms are interpreted and operationalized at the school level (Makerere University, 2025). Proactive administrators who organize teacher mentoring, coordinate internal training sessions, and communicate clear reform visions foster stronger adoption of competency-based practices.

However, findings also revealed that many school leaders lack systematic training in competency based paradigms. This limitation mirrors earlier literature highlighting insufficient preparation of administrators for reform management (Kachope et al., 2025). Without specialized leadership development, administrators may struggle to guide assessment reforms, classroom observation processes, and collaborative planning structures. This gap contributes directly to uneven implementation across schools.

5.2 Professional Development and Training

The analysis underscores continuous professional development as central to CBC success. Although some districts have initiated capacity building efforts, training remains fragmented and short term, particularly in rural districts such as Otuke (Kachope et al., 2025). Administrators require specific competencies in monitoring learner outcomes, supporting formative assessment practices, facilitating ICT integration, and planning resource allocation.

The findings align with UNESCO (2020) and IICBA (2025), which stress that effective CBC implementation depends on sustained, practice based professional learning rather than isolated workshops. Where administrators actively coordinate ongoing teacher learning, implementation quality improves. Conversely, limited administrative oversight weakens instructional transformation.

5.3 Resource Allocation and Infrastructure

Resource limitations emerged consistently across documentary sources. Schools face shortages of learner centred teaching materials, assessment rubrics, ICT tools, and infrastructure suitable for practical learning (EPRC Uganda, 2025). These findings reinforce literature identifying resource inadequacy as a persistent systemic barrier (Kachope et al., 2025).



Administrators are therefore required to assume strategic roles in budgeting, advocacy, and resource mobilization. However, financial constraints at UPE school level significantly restrict their capacity to procure materials or upgrade facilities. The documentary evidence further reveals disparities between urban and rural schools, suggesting that geographic location influences administrative capacity to support CBC.

5.4 Monitoring and Stakeholder Collaboration

Effective monitoring systems and stakeholder collaboration are critical to sustaining curriculum reforms. The findings indicated that regular supervision visits, internal evaluation frameworks, and data-driven feedback loops remain inconsistent across districts. This inconsistency weakens accountability and slows pedagogical transformation.

Administrators institutionalized professional learning communities and peer collaboration, CBC implementation demonstrates measurable improvement. Regional evidence from Kenya similarly shows that in-house teacher training and collaborative structures enhance competency-based practices (Koros & Achieng, 2022). These findings support the argument that administrative action can mitigate systemic constraints.

Additionally, stakeholder engagement particularly parental sensitization is essential in competency-oriented systems where assessment methods differ from traditional examinations (Kachope et al., 2025). Without community understanding, resistance to change may persist.

5.6 Bridging the Policy Implementation Gap

The documentary analysis further revealed that while National Curriculum Frameworks provide policy direction, implementation fidelity depends heavily on local administrative capacity. District education offices often face logistical and financial limitations that restrict effective support supervision. This decentralization challenge contributes to variation in reform outcomes.

Another significant finding concerned workload distribution. Administrators frequently balance instructional leadership with extensive administrative tasks, limiting their time for curriculum monitoring. Strengthening distributed leadership structures within schools may alleviate this burden and enhance reform oversight.

Overall, the findings validated existing literature that administrative preparedness is not peripheral but central to CBC success. Leadership competence, sustained professional development, resource mobilization, structured monitoring systems, and stakeholder engagement form interconnected prerequisites. In contexts such as Otuke District, addressing these prerequisites is essential to closing the gap between policy intentions and classroom realities.



6. Recommendations

Based on the reviewed literature and documentary findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

The Ministry of Education and District authorities should institutionalize mandatory, competency focused leadership training for headteachers and deputy headteachers. Such programs should emphasize instructional leadership, formative assessment supervision, data driven decision making, and strategic resource planning specific to CBC implementation.

Rather than one off workshops, continuous and school based professional development models should be adopted. Administrators should facilitate Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to encourage peer mentorship, collaborative planning, and reflective practice.

Government and district education offices should prioritize equitable distribution of CBC aligned instructional materials, digital tools, and assessment resources. Special funding considerations should be directed toward rural UPE schools such as those in Otuke District to address infrastructural disparities.

District education officers should institutionalize regular curriculum support supervision with structured feedback mechanisms. Schools should adopt internal monitoring systems to track implementation progress and learner outcomes.

Schools should conduct community sensitization programs to align parents and local stakeholders with CBC objectives. Stronger collaboration between schools, local governments, and community actors can foster shared ownership of curriculum reform.

7. Implications

The study implies that successful curriculum reform requires more than policy formulation;

Institutionally, it demands systemic administrative empowerment and targeted investment in school leadership development.

Practically, schools must embrace distributed leadership, collaborative cultures, and strategic resource management, with administrators shifting toward instructional leadership roles.

Theoretically, the findings affirmed that reform success depends on alignment between institutional capacity and policy goals, positioning administrative preparedness as a mediating factor between intention and practice.

Further empirical research is needed to examine how administrative readiness influences learner competency outcomes, especially in rural primary schools in Uganda.



8. Conclusion

Uganda's shift to a Competency Based Curriculum marks a major move toward learner centred, skills based education. However, its success in Universal Primary Education schools especially in rural districts like Otuke largely depends on administrative readiness. Effective leadership, continuous professional development, adequate resources, structured monitoring, and stakeholder collaboration are essential foundations. Although national policies provide strategic direction, meaningful implementation requires empowered school administrators and strengthened institutional capacity. Investing in leadership development, infrastructure, and systemic support is therefore critical to bridging the policy implementation gap and ensuring sustainable improvements in learner outcomes across Uganda.

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